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## Anybody's Beer Joint

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# Anybody's Beer Joint



BY  
C. MICHAEL MCKINNEY

When a stranger  
walks through their door,  
the thud-thud  
of dart boards cease  
while all heads pivot  
to the sound of the hinges.  
You won't find  
much perfume there,  
except the green mint odor  
of smokeless tobacco.  
They don't soft-cotton swaddle  
too many strangers,  
but manners outlive curiosity  
and soon they know your hand,  
your hometown,  
and your business.  
The regulars won't say much,  
but there are house darts  
if you really want to throw  
and at least one straight stick  
for the pool table.  
They hold their opinions  
close to their lips,  
at least until after you leave.  
They'll measure your jokes  
and your strokes on the cue ball,  
frown at your choice  
from the jukebox,  
then they'll walk outside  
to see what you drive  
before they make their decision.  
But most of all  
they'll check your manners  
and whether or not  
you raised the lid  
on the toilet in the unisex bathroom. ■



ILLUSTRATION BY  
MIKE SIGURDSON